

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Top SD Soldiers compete in best warrior competition

By Spc. Jessica Schumacher and Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann
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WATERTOWN, S.D. – The top eight Soldiers in the South Dakota Army National Guard competed in the state's Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, April 17-18, to be named the Soldier or Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Soldiers compete in a variety of events such as a timed five-mile ruck march, weapons marksmanship, obstacle course, land navigation, written exams and memory tests. In the end, the Soldier and NCO with the highest overall scores are named Soldier and NCO of the Year respectively.

The competition pushes Soldiers out of their comfort zones, challenging them mentally and physically, with a non-stop schedule of basic warrior skills, said Sgt. Maj. Phillip Lakner, a competition facilitator.

In addition to warrior tasks and battle drills, course facilitators add pressure and stress to the competition.

"The ability to think while being put under stress is something you want to see in a warrior," said Lakner. "By the end you can start to see separation between the mentally and physically tough and the ones who are 'resting on their laurels' if you will."

One way facilitators add stress is to keep the competitors moving from one event to the next without knowing what will be expected of them.

"The hardest part of the competition is the unknown," said Staff Sgt. David Goodwin of Black Hawk, a competitor representing the Rapid City-based Joint Force Headquarters. "We didn't know the distance of the ruck march so I didn't know how hard to push myself throughout the course."

Following the ruck march, competitors were tested on the weapons range with the M-9 pistol and M-16 rifle before moving onto an obstacle course and other timed-events until 1 a.m. Later that morning, competitors reported to a review board, where they were tested on a range of Army knowledge.

"After we were done with them Saturday morning they were tired," said Lakner. "We beat them up pretty good in the aspects of brain power and physical endurance. They were pretty much smoked."

Once scores were tallied, Spc. Patrick Moran, of Rapid City, with the 82nd Civil Support Team out of Ellsworth Air Force Base, was announced as the 2015 Soldier of the Year and Sgt. 1st Class Randy Pryor with 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment, Officer Candidate School, in Sturgis was named NCO of the Year.

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“I was surprised,” said Pryor, of Plankinton, upon hearing his name called as the NCO of the Year. “This was a challenging and stressful competition and the competitors were strong too. They kept me motivated as they were doing their best, so I had to bring out my best.”

Pryor and Moran both said it will be an honor to represent South Dakota at the Region 6 Best Warrior competition at Camp Guernsey in Wyoming May. They will compete against Soldiers from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota to earn the Region 6 Best Warrior titles and advance to the national competition.

“I truly believe that we have the quality of Soldiers and the spirit here in South Dakota to win,” said Lakner.

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



150417-Z-HG574-255: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David Goodwin, of Black Hawk, S.D., a member of South Dakota Army National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters, and Sgt. Ryan Dannen, of Tea, S.D., with the 211th Engineer Company, participate in the 5-mile ruck march during the state’s Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, S.D., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jessica Schumacher/Released)



150417-Z-HG574-308: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Alex Page, a native of Brookings, S.D., with the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team, Rapid City, S.D., participates in the obstacle course during the state’s Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, S.D., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jessica Schumacher/Released)



150417-Z-HG574-355: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ebsen, of Hartford, S.D., with the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 211th Engineer Company, participates in the obstacle course during the state’s Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, S.D., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jessica Schumacher/Released)



150417-Z-HG574-454: U.S. Army Spc. Patrick Moran, of Rapid City, S.D., a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team, participates in a timed event during the South Dakota Army National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, S.D., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jessica Schumacher/Released)



150417-Z-HG574-490: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Randy Pryor, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment, Officer Candidate School, earned the title of NCO of the Year, presented by retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry Eisenbraun after competing in the state's Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, April 18, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jessica Schumacher/Released)



150417-Z-HG574-495: U.S. Army Spc. Patrick Moran, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 82nd Civil Support Team, Rapid City, S.D., earned the title of Soldier of the Year, presented by retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry Eisenbraun, Command Sgt. Major (Ret) after competing in the state's Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, April 18, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jessica Schumacher/Released)

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